

Newtown Square, PA – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) fired the starting gun today initiating the runners' progress at the Pickle Run in Ridley Creek State Park. The participants furthered the race's altruistic cause by donating T-shirts to St. Vincent's De Paul Church's clothing drive, which benefits less fortunate members of the community. The collection takes place at every Pickle Run, which take place every 3rd Saturday in January, February, and March starting at 10 am at Ridley Creek State Park. Series sponsors include Run the Day Race Management, Nolan Painting and Red Fox Graphics.

Tim Krueger, Cardinal O'Hara graduating class of '83, organizes the Pickle Runs. He created the Pickle concept under the auspices of Run the Day Race Management, which he founded in 2000. The distance of the race was determined by the lay of the land, and where the runners wanted to run, preferring to deviate from more traditional race measurement standards. Last years inaugural Pickle Runs introduced local runners to a new concept in races: low in cost, high in fun, encouraging to all, with all the irreverence you can imagine.

Proud of the turnout, Congressman Sestak exclaimed, "It's wonderful to see the community's enthusiasm for this event; the novel concept behind the event encourages more participation by fitness enthusiasts and novices alike. I applaud Tim's inclusive concept; by awarding prizes based upon a range between predicated and actual finishing time, racers that normally would forbear from attending these events will be less hesitant to participate. It's a great way to encourage fitness in the District while supporting a great cause – providing clothing to less fortunate members of the community. "

Increased awareness of the benefits of exercise has led to improved fitness by members of the community. Striving to foster further participation, Congressman Sestak supports the "Fitness Integrated with Teaching Kids Act," which amends the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to support quality physical education for all public school children through grade 12 and ensure they receive important health and nutritional information.

Childhood obesity in the United States has reached epidemic proportions. It is estimated that by 2010, twenty percent of children in the U.S. will be obese. Researchers suggest that the childhood obesity epidemic is largely due to a decline in regular physical activity and a diet high in empty and fat-laden calories. Experts agree that increasing physical activity is the most important component of any program to combat childhood obesity, yet many schools are cutting back on physical education (PE) programs because of lack of resources and competitive academic standards.

Between 1991 and 2003, enrollment of high school students in daily PE classes fell from 41.6% to 28.4%. Yet studies have shown a lack of regular physical activity can hurt a child's academic, social and emotional development. Research shows that healthy children learn more effectively and achieve more academically. Physical activity may also have a positive impact on cognitive ability and reductions in tobacco use, insomnia, depression, and anxiety.

Congressman Sestak explained, "H.R. 3257 amends the No Child Left behind Act to encourage public schools to provide regular and quality physical education and activity for all students through the twelfth grade and hold them accountable for meeting national standards. For this reason, I am a proud cosponsor of the FIT Kids Act (H.R. 3257). On September 19, 2007 it was referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education, and rest assured I will support this bill."

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.*

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